

CANADIAN FAMILY PHYSICIAN is currently receiving many more books than can be reviewed. For this reason, the system of listing books received will be adopted for future issues, and only those of direct relevance to family medicine will be reviewed in full. Readers who would like to review books are invited to send a list of their special interests to the editor.

'How Many Pts.?'— Asking the Unanswerable

Title: How Many Patients?

Author: J. R. Butler

Publisher: Bedford Square Press, c/o Renouf/USA Inc., Old Post Road, Brookfield, VT. 05036, U.S.A.

Publication Date: 1980

Pages: 144

Price: \$18.75

We laugh at the venerable divines of the Middle Ages for their endless debates about the number of angels who could dance on the head of a pin, but overlook intellectuals' continuing fascination with problems which are, by their very nature, without an answer.

Family doctors will, for all eternity it seems, be arguing as this book does about how many patients can be cared for by each FP. In North America the question tends to be approached in a parallel fashion: how many patients can a doctor see a day and still practice good medicine? There is the rub, because we still do not know what FPs should be doing, or how to evaluate their work effectively even if we did. Even if we have made the effort required to answer these formidable questions, the answer will vary from situation to situation, and possibly even from doctor to doctor. Furthermore, for any one doctor, the reality of 'optimal medical practice' will change with time.

Unanswerable questions just won't leave us alone. The trouble is that the

"How many patients" question is of tremendous practical importance to virtually every aspect of health care planning. If it keeps Monique Bégin awake at nights, maybe you too should struggle with the circular arguments in this book. And, as you do so, please think more kindly of St. Thomas Aquinas!

Reviewed by R. C. Westbury. Dr. Westbury, a certificant of the College, practices family medicine in Calgary.

Pediatrics Text Misses FPs' Needs

Title: The Essentials of Pediatrics—
The Clinical Core in Outline

Author: Arthur J. Moss/Thomas J. Moss

Publisher: J. B. Lippincott Co., 75 Horner Ave., Toronto, ON. M8Z 4X7

Publication Date: 1980

Pages: 323

Price: \$18

The book's title summarizes it rather nicely: an outline of a core course in pediatrics written in lecture note style. In the introduction the authors say the book is a survey of the fundamentals of pediatrics and is not meant to be a comprehensive textbook which they feel is often too detailed and too voluminous for reference.

The first three chapters are precise, compact notes on the history and physical, the newborn, and selected pediatric topics such as nutrition, growth and development, and psychosocial problems. There are a few helpful primary care tips such as leaving the ENT exam for last, as well as advice to give a parent when the child's appetite wanes.

The small section on breast-feeding contains only tips on scheduling feeds and has none of the newer findings on breast milk nutrition. The comprehensive notes on developmental milestones and immunization provide a quick and easy reference for the busy family physician. There is, however,

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